

Laila Halaby

- Born in Beirut, Lebanon, to a Jordanian father and American mother
- Grew up mostly in Arizona
- Studied folklore in Jordan on a Fullbright scholarship
- Published a previous novel, *West of the Jordan*, as well as a “memoir in poems” called *his name on my tongue*





Muslims and Arabs in America Post 9/11

Data taken from:

Katharina Motyl, “No Longer a Promised Land—The Arab and Muslim Experience in the U.S. after 9/11”

Suppression of Civil Liberties

- Following 9/11, U.S. government passed legislation that curtailed the civil liberties of all Americans, but . . .
- 25 of the 37 known government security initiatives implemented between September 12, 2001 and mid-2003 either explicitly or implicitly targeted Arabs and Muslims in the U.S.



These Initiatives Included:

- Mass arrests
- Secret and indefinite detentions
- Closed hearings and use of secret evidence
- FBI home and workplace visits
- Wiretapping
- Seizures of property
- Mandatory special registration



Numbers

- According to conservative estimates, the number of Arabs and Muslims who personally experienced at least one of these measures was at least 100,000.
- Many estimates higher



RIDZDESIGN

Special Registration

- Special registration was implemented on September 11, 2002
- Required male nonimmigrant aliens over the age of sixteen who are citizens and nationals from select countries to be interviewed under oath, fingerprinted, and photographed by an INS official.
- Both point-of-entry registration and call-in registration for people already here (call-in registration ended in Dec. 2003)
- During the first round of call-in registration, almost 1200 registrants nationwide were arrested and detained for visa violations – despite the fact that they had voluntarily complied with the program



Special Registration, cont.

- Many of the men detained had been living in the U.S. for over a decade and had children who were U.S. citizens; quite a few had pending applications for permanent residency; many whose status was, in fact, legal were arrested because of INS backlogs
- Overall, according to the Department of Homeland Security, deportation orders were issued for 13,434 of the roughly 83,000 men who underwent call-in registration, based on visa irregularities.
- Special registration did not lead to a single charge of terrorism

Patriot Act



ACLU's perception of
The Patriot Act

- Section 215 of the PATRIOT Act, which has been principally used on Arabs and Muslims, permits the FBI to obtain in total secrecy objects pertaining to a person not suspected of criminal activity such as books, records, papers, and documents, whether they are in the person's home or in the possession of a third party.
- The section does not require the government to show probable cause for its actions.
- Imposes a gag order on the parties served with a section 215 order, prohibiting them from informing anyone of the government's actions or the gag order.
- Act extended many times, but allowed to expire in March of 2020, when House declined further extensions

Countries selected for Special Registration

- Almost always Muslim-majority countries, whether allies of the U.S. or not
- Therefore, program driven by a logic other than enemy nationality
- Govt. officials stated that the countries on the list were selected because of *al Qaeda* presence
- However, some selected countries had no proven *al Qaeda* presence, while other countries with known *al Qaeda* presence, such as Germany and England, were excluded from the list
- Conclusion that the U.S. govt. considered males born into Islamic cultures in the Middle East, North Africa or Asia to be potential terrorists

False assumption that a terrorist is foreign born, an alien in the U.S., and a Muslim



- Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing, for example
- Outrage if those matching the religious affiliation and citizenship of McVeigh had had to register after the bombing?
- Catholic males with U.S. citizenship



Hate Crimes After 9/11

- FBI reported a 1600% increase in hate-based incidents against persons perceived to be Muslim between 2000 and 2001.
- At least four individuals were killed for being Arab or Muslim – or mistaken to be such
- Mark Anthony Stroman shot 3 men while they were working at gas stations and convenience stores in Dallas, Texas (including Rais Bhuiyan, above, who survived). One of the murdered victims a Hindu.

Balbir Singh Sodhi



- Indian Sikh gunned down outside his gas station in Mesa, Arizona, because he was wearing the traditional Sikh head covering.
- His assassin had previously bragged of his intention to “kill the ragheads responsible for September 11”
- Mentioned specifically in Halaby’s novel

Statistics

Detroit Arab American Study, conducted by the University of Michigan in 2003, asked about post-9/11 attitudes towards security and civil liberties

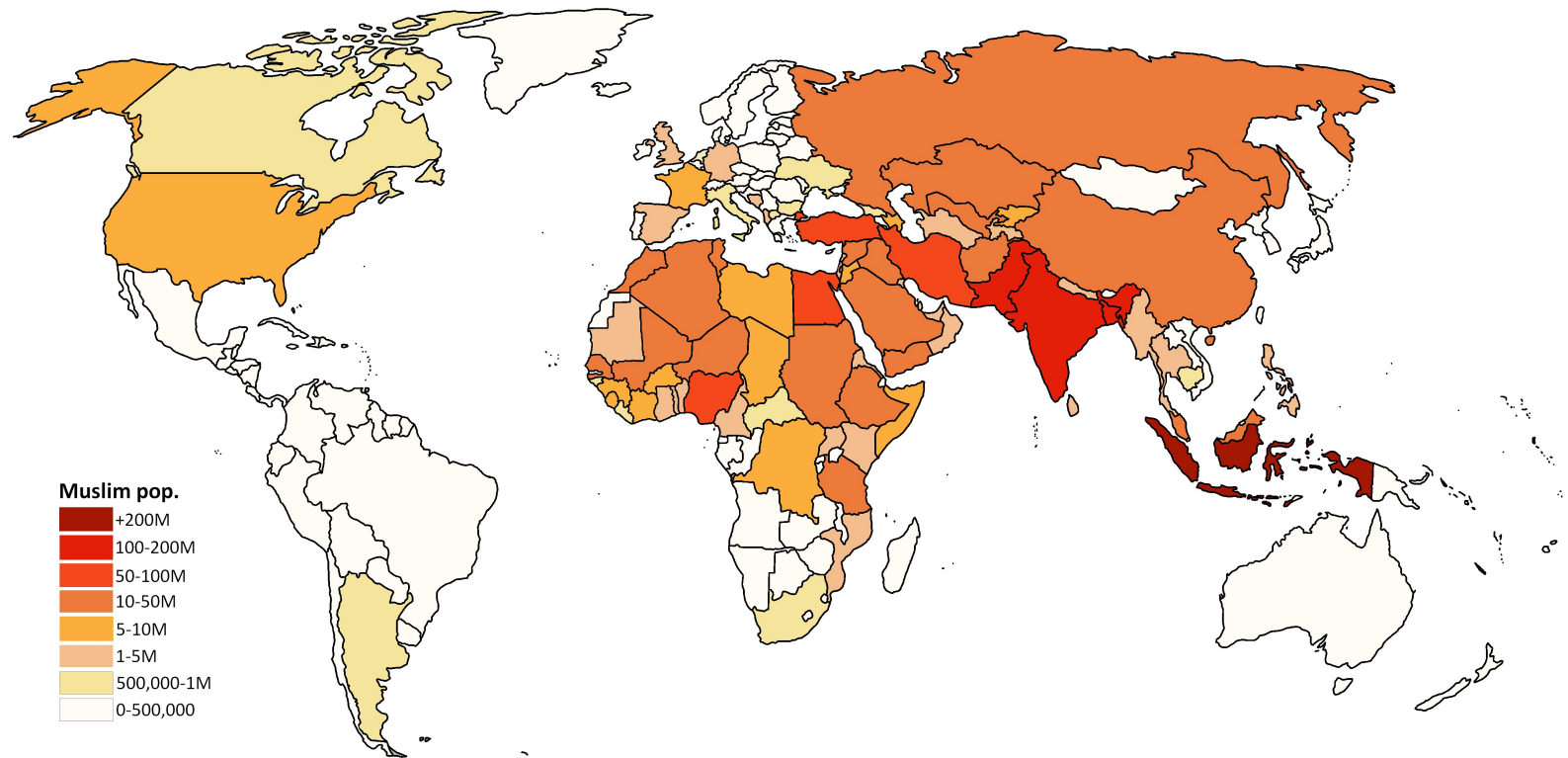
- Findings:

- 49 percent of the general population of U.S. would support increased surveillance of Muslim and Arab Americans
- 23 percent of the general population would support increased police powers to stop and search Muslim and Arab Americans
- 41 percent of the general population would uphold the detention of suspicious Arabs and Muslims even without sufficient evidence to prosecute



Idea that
Arabs =
Muslims;
Muslims =
Arabs

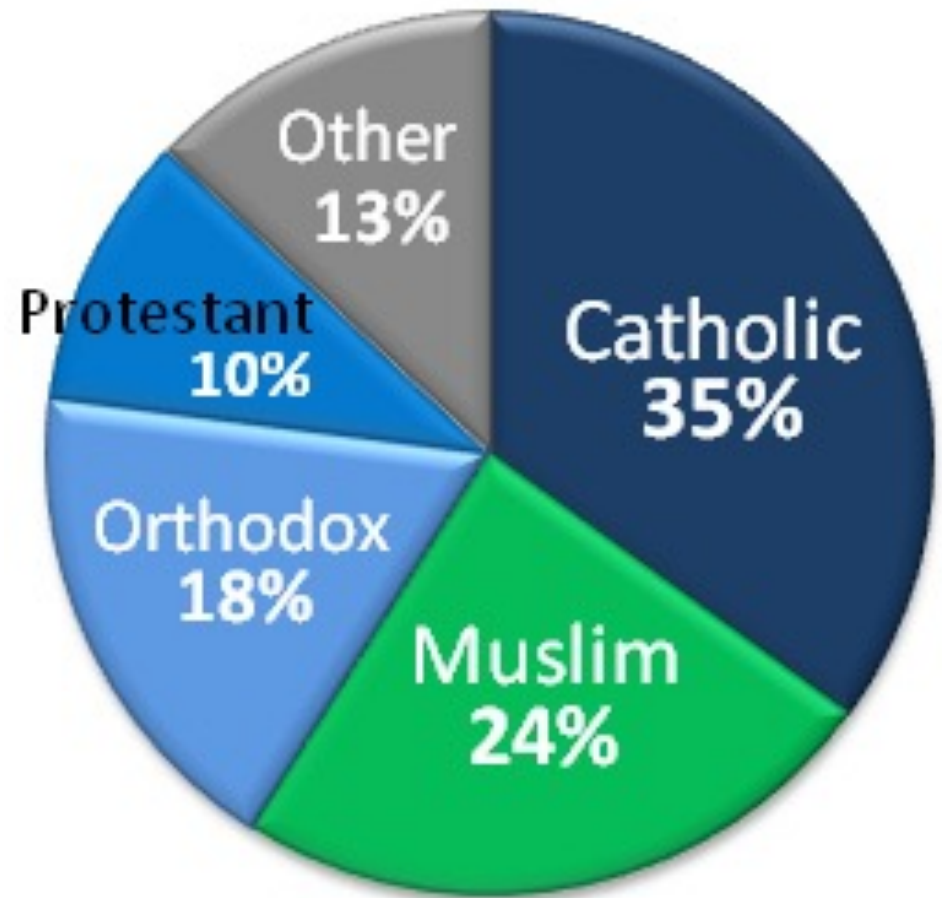
- Cultural racism (what Edward Said called “Orientalism”) conflates the categories Arab, Middle-Eastern, Muslim
- Middle East actually highly heterogenous in terms of national, ethnic, religious, linguistic identities
- Such discourse erases differences between ethnically Arab and non-Arab middle easterners such as Iranians, Turks, Armenians
- Area supports wide range of religious denominations including Christians, Jews, Shia Muslims, Sunni Muslims, etc.



- Also, majority of world's 1.2 billion Muslims do not live in the Middle East
- 300 million Muslims in the Middle East
- Majority of Muslims are in South and Southeast Asia
- 5 countries with largest Muslim populations: Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Turkey

Arab Americans

- Of the estimated 4 million Arab Americans, 63% are Christian, 24% are Muslim, the rest are other religions



Muslims in America

- Of the 6-7 million Muslims living in the U.S., Arabs make up 25%.
- Largest groups are actually African Americans at 30% and South Asians at 33%

